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TO THE

Right Hon. WILLIAM Pitt,

ON THE USE OF

HAIR-POWDER, &c. &c.

LONDON:

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*Just published, by the same Author, and to all of  
which this Letter refers.*

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LETTER, &c.

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SIR,

A TAX upon luxury is certainly a desirable way of raising money for government; and had the intended one on those who use Hair-powder been proposed fifteen years ago, I should have thought it a good tax; but for these twelve years past, I have been of another way of thinking. Perhaps the opinion of an obscure individual will have little or no weight with most people; yet I humbly hope, when they consider the reasons which made me alter my mind, they will have the same good effect on them.

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I found Hair-powder hurtful to health, as it stops the pores and frequently occasions the tooth-ach, and all the diseases of the head, which arise from obstructed perspiration.

In considering the effects of powder more fully, I found it to be hurtful to the hair; I afterwards saw it to be a sinful practice, introduced by the folly of the ballad-singers at the fair of St. Germain, in 1614: however, this fashion made but slow progress in this country till within these last forty years. At the coronation of his late Majesty there were only two hair-dressers in London.—The quantity of wheat consumed in the manufacture of starch and hair-powder, is incredible. In the 165th page of "*Sketches of a Plan for an effectual and general Reformation of Life and Manners,*" printed in November last, I threw out a hint of the luxury of hair-powder being extended to charity children, which I believe is the first time this practice has been objected to.

I shall endeavour to shew that the high price of bread is chiefly owing to the great  
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and general use of hair-powder, by which the public are annually deprived of more than thirty millions of quatern loaves!

By the accounts from the Excise-office, now lying on the table of the Honourable House of Commons, it appears that the quantity of starch made in Great-Britain, in one year, was 8,170,019 $\frac{1}{2}$  pounds. The quantity of wheat expended in making the above-mentioned starch would have made more than four millions of quatern loaves.

I saw by the newspapers, that you had stated the number of hair-dressers in this kingdom to be 50,000; suppose each of those used only one pound of flour a day, on an average, which amounts to 18,250,000 in one year, or 5,314,284 quatern loaves at the usual allowance of 3 $\frac{1}{2}$  pounds of flour for a quatern loaf; and suppose only four times this quantity of flour used by those who dress their own hair, and others who are not professed hair-dressers, will make 21,256,936 quatern loaves; those three numbers being added, amount in all to 30,571,226 quatern loaves, at 9 pence each, which

which is one farthing under the present affize, and amounts to one million one hundred and forty-six thonsand, four hundred and twenty-one pounds, British money. Great as this sum may seem to appear, yet I believe it far short of the real quantity and value of wheat and flour used in the making of starch and hair-powder, especially when I consider that 8,170,019 $\frac{1}{2}$  was made and the duties paid for it in one year, besides the quantity of foreign starch and hair-powder which are imported or clandestinely brought into this country, and the great quantity of flour which is mixed with the starch and sold with stamps, as hair-powder; besides, in many private families, flour only is used; and in some of the cheap dressing shops they frequently use a peck of flour, that is 14 pounds, on a Sunday only, so that the average I have stated of one pound a day, appears to be under what is really expended.

It is remarkable, that what originated in France by folly, has lately been prohibited there from necessity. The Dutch have likewise

wife prohibited the making of starch. I humbly hope, Sir, when you re-consider this matter, you will also have the manufacture of starch and hair-powder prohibited in this country. Our heavenly Father gives us the produce of the earth for food and for medicine, and we have no right to apply it to any other use.

I was sorry to observe, that there were some to be exempted from paying the proposed tax for licences to use hair powder ; if it is sinful to use it, I conceive it to be more so to establish the use of it by a law, not only to raise money, but to encourage those who are supposed unable to pay to continue the use of it ; all who have offices, or expect to get them, will be induced to use hair powder ; it will also encourage cheats and swindlers to use it, that they may the better carry on their depredations on the public : What tradesman will refuse credit to a powdered person, who proves by his appearance, that he gives a guinea a-year to the revenue, for a licence to use a luxury in dress ? or what clergyman can publicly pray for daily bread, and a blessing on the fruits

fruits of the earth, when the powder on his head, exhibits a disregard to the desire of our Saviour, who after he fed the multitude, commanded the fragments to be gathered up, that nothing might be lost? or what magistrate or judge can administer an oath, or give judgment, when the powder on his head shews, he has not the fear of **God** before his eyes? And how absurd and sinful would it be in overseers of the poor, and others, who make collections for their relief, to use hair powder, when it raises the price of bread, and deprives the people of Great-Britain of more than thirty millions of quartern loaves annually?

I hope all who use hair powder have done it inadvertantly, and that they will now discontinue so hurtful a practice, when they may expect the blessings promised in the 41st Psalm, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. the Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him into the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of

of languishing ; thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness."

Many people gave up the use of sugar, because they thought it encouraged slavery ; surely all those and every good person will discontinue the use of hair powder when it so materially affects the poor ; perhaps some will go further, and not lay out their money in any shop or place where the use of powder is continued. It is a matter of great importance, and requires our most serious attention to put an immediate and final stop to so sinful a practice, and more especially in the present time of general distress, owing to the high price of bread ; when we consider that by this useless piece of luxury, above One Million of money has been thrownaway within these last twelve months, and the people of this country deprived of more than Thirty Millions of quartern loaves.

I can say from experience, that combing the hair every morning is very refreshing, and the hair is stronger and darker than when I used powder, which I conceive had

the same effect on the hair as the earthing up of cellery to make it white and tender; besides, I have known some who have got free of violent head-achs, by letting their hair grow, after they had used every medical help in vain.

It seems remarkable at this time when so many people talk about liberty and freedom, yet they themselves are willing slaves to this sinful, dirty, and unhealthy fashion of wearing powder, and that they should put themselves into the hands and power of a French hair-dresser, to give them the appearance of a gentleman.

You have it now in your power by prohibiting the use of starch and hair-powder, to render your country a most important service, for which thousands will thank you; and by the reducing the price of bread, millions will bless you.

In the miscellaneous proposals, &c. and also in the Sketches of a Plan for an effectual and general Reformation of Life and Manners, I have pointed out the great benefits that would follow from lessening the number

number of horses, and increasing the number of black-cattle and sheep, which can be easily done by making the public roads more straight and level, and by extending the inland navigation.

I also proposed a Royal Dock Yard in Scotland, for building and repairing His Majesty's ships, and giving protection to that coast, and the Baltic trade.

My letter to the Magistrates, Burgeesses, &c. of the Royal Burghs of Scotland shews my desire to have prevented the riots there; and had Sir James Stirling, Baronet, the then Lord Provost of Edinburgh, attended to it as I had reason to expect, I believe those riots would not have happened; as my plans are to encourage, protect, and reward the good and virtuous; to reform the bad, and so to prevent crimes; and at the same time to increase the public revenue, by means of a constant watch. Although the idea be new and important, yet it has never been properly attended to; but the old and severe practice of punishing is still carried on, attended with a considerable expenditure of the public money.

If I am rightly informed, the late trials in London and Edinburgh have cost government above Two Hundred Thousand Pounds ; and the expence of the convicts in the hulks, and establishing a settlement for them in Botany Bay, has amounted to above Two Millions. All this money might have been saved, and an additional revenue established by the profits arising from the constant watch.

I have mentioned in the 97th page of Sketches, &c. how the public revenue has been increased above Sixty Thousand Pounds a-year by my means ; and in the " Sketch of a Plan to prevent Crimes," I have stated that a part of my plans had been adopted in two British acts of parliament ; and I now understand that there is a bill before the Irish parliament to improve the police of Dublin, by establishing a constant watch, which is adopting a part of the above plan for the preventing of crimes, and exhibits the strongest proof of the utility of my propofals, though it affords no encouragement to communicate more,

unless

unless my former proposals are agreed to, which are chiefly to secure to me, that no advantage shall be taken of my schemes, without my consent; and this I shall be ready at all times to grant, upon being allowed only one tenth part of the neat profits for a limited time, and the remaining nine-tenths to be at the disposal of parliament: in this way the public will receive all the advantages I have stated in the four pamphlets mentioned on the back of the title-page of this letter, to which I humbly beg leave to refer.

All those with whom I have conversed on this business have done me the honour to say they thought my request was reasonable, and heartily wished me success. Many have said they longed to see a trial made of the constant watch, that the streets, &c. may at all times be safe to walk in and the people protected in their persons and property; and I have no doubt if you would permit me the honour of an audience, that something might be devised for the happiness of the people, and the revenue rendered more productive.

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One thing I am certain of, that I can show how the streets may be put and kept in such a way as to be always safe and convenient for carriages and passengers; and if this plan is persevered in, London and Westminister will never be in so bad a situation as they were last winter, or even as they are now, notwithstanding we have had so much dry weather of late.

If the poor are to be allowed bread at a reasonable price, as I hope in God they shall, either by your getting the use of starch and hair-powder prohibited, or by the good sense of the people discontinuing so pernicious a fashion, the public will then have a great deal of spare time.

The many hours at present spent with their hair-dresser may be profitably employed in business, study, or amusement, when the streets and roads are improved by having houses, gardens, &c. for the watchmen. It will then afford much entertainment and instruction to all who chuse to amuse themselves by this sort of recreation.

I shall state, in another way, the loss this country

country sustains by the folly of employing hair-dressers : Suppose each of the 50,000 at present in this kingdom, make only forty pounds a-year on an average, (which I am told is not the tenth part of what some are said to get,) this amounts to Two Millions, which with the Million already mentioned as the value of starch and hair-powder, makes Three Millions annually thrown away, in starving the poor and encouraging French hair-dressers, who are no friends to our laws, religion, or constitution. As powdering the hair is now prohibited in France, we may expect a great many more hair-dressers here, who will corrupt the people, and diffuse their bad principles over the country, to the prejudice of the free-born servants of this kingdom, who are loudly, and I believe justly complaining of the preference given to foreigners.

The milliners will be much benefited by prohibiting hair-powder, as it will afford full scope to their taste and fancy, when they are no longer subject to the caprice of the hair-dresser ; and the wig-makers will also

also find their businesſ revive, which has been much hurt by the introduction of powdering the hair; the houses will be more healthy and clean when hair-powder is abolished; this is evident when it is considered that ſome hair-drefſfers have expended one pound of powder in the dressing of one head, a great part of the powder is puft about the room, and draws mice and rats thither. I remember of a young lady when ſhe was getting out of bed, found ſomething heavy about her head, on putting up her hand, out run a female rat who in the night had made a nest of the lady's hair, and brought forth her young. The lady was thrown into a violent fever by the fright.

To conclude, I humbly hope you will conſider the preſent distressed ſituation of the poor, and that you will alſo ſhew me ſome ſubſtantial mark of favour, who have ſpent above half a century in ſerving my country without having received one penny of public money. I likewife hope that you will make trial of the conſtant watch, and put it under my direcſion, when you may expect

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to see the laws enforced, and crimes prevented, and the revenue made more productive.

In case I should still be so unfortunate as not to meet with some ministerial favour, I hope the public, whose generosity and liberality are so well known over the world, will shew me some mark of their regard, in whatever way seems most agreeable to themselves, which they may do by using their interest to bring forward my proposals for a constant watch, &c. or making me some present as a mark of their favour for one who has served his country more than fifty years without having any reward. I can see no reason why any person who has such claims for public services should be ashamed of accepting what mark of favour his country, or individuals in it, may think proper to bestow; especially when I consider that the richest and wisest king that ever was, accepted gifts; and I remember his Royal Highness William Duke of Cumberland, when

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in Scotland, in 1746, accepted whatever present was brought him; amongst other presents, a farmer in the neighbourhood of Perth carried a black lamb to his Royal Highness, when in that city.

As some of my acquaintance have expressed a wish to know by what method I got free of the bad effects of hair-powder, I desire to acquaint them and all who chuse to have this secret, that I shall give them particular directions how to preserve the hair, and prevent its falling off; and also put them on a method how it may be in a great measure restored to its former colour, as I have proved by my own experience; and shall be ready to make it known to all who subscribe five guineas; and as soon as I have got one thousand subscribers, I shall send each of them a copy of said directions.

All who honour me with any letters are requested to send them, post paid, to the care

care of Messrs. CADELL & DAVIES, book-sellers, Strand, which shall be duly attended to.

I have the honour to be,

With the greatest respect,

SIR,

Your most humble and

Most obedient servant,

London, April 15,

1795.

JOHN DONALDSON.

